





Power and Principle: U.S. Foreign Policy Traditions

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Outline

- Key U.S. Foreign Policy Traditions
- Historical Events & Competing Lenses
- Ideological Foundations of U.S. International Behavior
- Theoretical Perspectives on Current Issues
- Domestic Politics & Foreign Policy
- Conclusion

Overview of Traditions

-  Jacksonian - National honor, sovereignty, decisive force
-  Wilsonian - Internationalism, moral leadership
-  Jeffersonian - Restraint, liberty, non-entanglement
-  Hamiltonian - Realism, commerce, strong central government

Jacksonian Tradition

- Emphasis on national honor and sovereignty
- Quick, decisive use of force when threatened
- Skepticism toward international institutions
- Example: War of 1812, Trump-era tariffs

Wilsonian Tradition

- Moral responsibility to spread democracy
- Support for international institutions and law
- Willingness to intervene for humanitarian purposes
- Example: U.S. entry into WWI, founding of the UN

Jeffersonian & Hamiltonian

- Jeffersonian - Avoid entangling alliances; Protect liberty through restraint; Example: Neutrality Proclamation
- Hamiltonian - Strong central government for global commerce; Engagement for economic advantage; Example: Louisiana Purchase

Timeline: Early Republic to Civil War

- 1789 — Neutrality Proclamation (Jeffersonian)
- 1803 — Louisiana Purchase (Hamiltonian)
- 1812 — War of 1812 (Jacksonian)
- 1846 — Mexican-American War (Expansionist blend)

Timeline: World Wars & Cold War

- 1917 — Entry into WWI (Wilsonian)
- 1920s–30s — Isolationism (Jeffersonian)
- 1945 — UN Creation (Wilsonian + Hamiltonian)
- 1947 — Containment Doctrine (Cold War realism)

Timeline: Post–Cold War & War on Terror

- 1991 — Gulf War (Hamiltonian)
- 1999 — NATO Expansion (Wilsonian)
- 2001 — 9/11 & War on Terror (Jacksonian)
- 2003 — Iraq War (Mix of Jacksonian & Wilsonian)

Trump Era: Foreign Policy Achievements

- Abraham Accords in the Middle East
- Increased NATO member defense spending
- Direct diplomacy with North Korea

Trump Era: Economic & Trade Moves

- Renegotiation of NAFTA into USMCA
- Tariffs on China to address trade imbalance
- Push for energy independence

Ideological Foundations

- Exceptionalism vs. Realism
- Individual liberty as a guiding principle
- Historical roots in the Founding Fathers

Domestic Politics & Policy Choices

- Partisan divides in foreign policy
- Public opinion's influence
- Role of media narratives

Conclusion

- U.S. foreign policy is a dynamic mix of traditions
- Domestic politics and leadership style shape outcomes
- Understanding traditions helps anticipate future choices